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FILE ONLY

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Disinformation, Please

"This is the White House Office of Disinformation. Can we help you with any stories today?"

"What are you selling?"

"We have a good one on Gadhafi catching diaper rash from sitting on the desert floor too long."

"How do I know that this is true disinformation?"

"It comes stamped with the Seal of the United States government."

"Can I think about it?"

"We can't hold it up. Larry Speakes is going to plant it with The Wall Street Journal."

"You people have been putting out an awful lot of false stories about Libya. Aren't you afraid that people won't be able to distinguish between the truth and the garbage?"

"All we're doing is telling it like it is and hoping it plays in Tripoli. If you're not buying Libya, can we give you an exclusive briefing on South Africa? We have some great lies on all the Republican senators who overrode the president's veto last week."

"That's not the kind of erroneous story I deal in."

"All right. What if I told you the president was about to convince the Botha government to give up apartheid, when the U.S. Congress sabotaged the whole deal?"

"With all due respect, even Pat Buchanan wouldn't believe that one."

"He's the person who is passing it around."

"I don't think I want to mess with a South African fairy tale. Could you disinform me on the summit?"

"Gorbachev works for the CIA."

"You're kidding," I said. "This is probably the hottest disinformation story of the year. How come the president is still going to Iceland if he knows this?"

"The president doesn't know it. We made it up at lunch today in the White House mess. We keep Reagan away from the disinformation crisis room as much as possible so he won't be caught in a credibility gap."

"Does he mind?"

"President Reagan doesn't like to be kept out of things, but he realizes that when it comes to lying, there are other people in the government who are so much better at it than he is."

"If I don't take the Gorbachev disinformation, is there anything else you can deceive me with?"

"I have something that was created from pure cloth and is hot out of the oven."

"That sounds up my alley."

"The latest disinformation we have on Central America is that Nicaragua has the bomb."

"THE bomb?"

"We're calling it a bomb. The reason for putting out the disinformation is we can now go back to Congress and ask them to give the contras a bomb. You better take this one because we're going to release the disinformation to Evans and Novak tomorrow morning, and then it will be in the public domain."

"The White House owes the story to me," I said. "You people haven't given me a falsehood in weeks."

"You're on our 'A' leak list," he assured me. "When we plant false newspaper reports, you are one of the first people we call."

"How does the White House Office of Disinformation want its stories attributed?"

"Just credit it to a high administration official who rides a horse and works in the Oval Office. When it comes to official deception, it's better for our credibility if we don't pinpoint the source."

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